

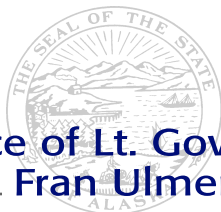


*Alaska Democracy Project*  
**Alaska Democracy Project**  
*Citizens for a New Millennium*

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## **Action Plan**

January 2002



Office of Lt. Governor  
Fran Ulmer

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*Alaska Democracy Project*  
**ALASKA DEMOCRACY PROJECT**

*Citizens for a New Millemmium*

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**ACTION PLAN**

January 2002

The Office of Lieutenant Governor Fran Ulmer  
P.O. Box 110015  
Juneau, AK 99811-0015  
(907) 465-3520; Fax: (907) 465-5400  
[www.gov.state.ak.us./ltgov/](http://www.gov.state.ak.us./ltgov/)



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# Introduction

## INTRODUCTION

*The goals of the Alaska Democracy Project are to expand and improve civics education in K-12 and to increase youth participation in programs and experiences that will deepen their interest in and understanding of citizenship.*

## History

Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer initiated the *Alaska Democracy Project* (ADP) in April 2001. The project was conceived as a follow up to the successful project, *Let's Vote! Alaska: New Voters for a New Millennium*. This initiative helped to increase youth voter turnout by 48 percent during the 2000 General Election. The Democracy Project was designed to continue the momentum of *Let's Vote! Alaska* and to help young people develop the knowledge and skills needed to be active citizens.

The ADP was augmented by a parallel civics education effort undertaken by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), the New Millennium Project. The Association provided background and national research on civics education. The *Alaska Democracy Project* and NASS's New Millennium Project reflect a growing concern about the civic disconnection of the American public. Civic apathy among students has been confirmed in extensive research that includes polls, surveys and national and international tests. Voter turnout, the most obvious of citizenship indicators, continues to be disappointingly low.

## Citizenship

The Democracy Project was designed to continue the momentum of **Let's Vote! Alaska** and to help young people develop the knowledge and skills needed to be active citizens.

## Task Force

Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer announced the appointment of the *Alaska Democracy Project* Task Force on July 4, 2001. The group of educators and community leaders were asked to determine the civics education needs of Alaska's students, teachers and schools and to develop an action plan to meet those needs. Members and their institutional or organizational affiliations are listed below.

### TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer—*Chair*  
 David Baranow—*Alaska Bar Association*  
 Mary Bristol—*Anchorage School District*  
 Sammy Crawford—*League of Women Voters of Alaska*  
 Alma Elia—*St. Mary's School District*  
 Rae Fancher—*Association of Alaska Student Governments*  
 Letitia Fickel—*University of Alaska Anchorage*  
 George Irvin—*First Alaskans Foundation*  
 Michael Jackson—*Kake Magistrate*  
 Grant Kashatok—*Lower Kuskokwim School District*

Steve Lindbeck—*Anchorage Daily News*  
 Ken Macgregor—*Alaska Parent Teacher Association*  
 Jo Michalski—*Anchorage Business Owner*  
 Carl Rose—*Association of Alaska School Boards*  
 Betty Walters—*Alaska Association of School Administrators*

## Assumption

An underlying assumption of the task force was that public schools are the only institutions with the explicit purpose of preparing students for participation in a democracy.

An underlying assumption of the task force was that public schools are the only institutions with the explicit purpose of preparing students for participation in a democracy. The civic mission of the schools is to foster the qualities required for successful government within a constitutional democracy. The task force recognizes that education for good citizenship should be a top priority of education and that civics should be seen as a central concern from kindergarten through twelfth grade, whether it is taught as a part of other curricula or in separate courses.

The task force met four times via audio conference and held one in-person meeting September 25 in conjunction with the Alaska Community Service Commission. Primary group communication was via email. Work was done by two subcommittees, the Classroom Civics Committee (Carl Rose, Chair) and the Extracurricular Civics Programs Committee (David Baranow, Chair) which met numerous times via audio conference.

The group had access to an extensive body of research on civic education through the Internet. Printed materials were also made available to the task force. The work of the National Association of Secretaries of State (Millennium Project), Center for Civic Education, and National Commission on Civic Renewal were vital resources for the group. The National Standards for Civics and the Alaska Standards for Civics and Government served as the educational foundation for the project.

The work of the task force took on special poignancy when terrorists struck the United States on September 11, 2001. The group's deliberations were given heightened visibility and urgency as American patriotism was in widespread evidence. The challenge has been to convert that patriotic fervor into a deepened understanding of the role and importance of civics education and active citizens in sustaining a democracy.

## TASK FORCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the six-month project period, the task force initiated activities that reinforced the mission and goal of the ADP.

### SURVEY

To model the democratic process to the extent possible, the ADP began with on-line civics education surveys for students, teachers and the general public. The surveys were designed to examine the status of civics education in kindergarten through grade 12 and to elicit recommendations from the public regarding civics education. Close to 300 individuals responded to the survey. Results were tabulated and made available to the task force and to the general public through the Alaska Democracy Project web site. The survey revealed the general availability of a civics curriculum in many middle and high schools throughout the state. Adult respondents emphasized the value of extracurricular and school-based participatory civics programs. Respondent comments were especially helpful.

## ALASKA DEMOCRACY PROJECT WEBSITE

A web site was established to communicate activities of the project and task force with the general public. The site includes civics surveys, national and state civic links, civics-related opportunities for students and teachers, task force information, Let's Vote! Alaska summary information, and ADP press releases. Working in committees, the task force developed a chart of civic education programs available in Alaska and a check list for evaluating the democratic climate of the classroom and school, both of which are available on the site. The ADP site will be maintained under the jurisdiction of the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development as a "one-stop site" for civics education.

## ALASKA DEMOCRACY WEEK

Governor Tony Knowles proclaimed the first annual Alaska Democracy Week (October 15-19, 2001) at the request of the Alaska Democracy Project. The Week was organized around Alaska Day (October 18) which served as a catalyst for the event. With collaboration from the Alaska Municipal League and the Legislative Affairs Agency, the week featured visits to schools by legislators, mayors and other policy makers, youth forums, open house at the Capitol and at city halls, and other activities.

## *Proclamation*

Governor Tony Knowles proclaimed the first annual Alaska Democracy Week (October 15-19, 2001) at the request of the Alaska Democracy Project.



## STATE OF ALASKA

## *Proclamation*

*by Tony Knowles, Governor*

One important goal of public education in our democracy is to prepare students to become involved citizens.

The special project, Let's Vote! Alaska: New Voters for a New Millennium, was a success in increasing the voter turnout of 18-24 year olds by 48 percent. Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer initiated a second effort, the Alaska Democracy Project, to continue to encourage young people to get involved in government.

The Alaska Democracy Task Force was appointed to recommend ways to expand and improve civics education for students in kindergarten through grade 12 and to increase youth participation in programs and experiences that will deepen their interest and understanding of citizenship.

In a recent International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement study of the civic knowledge, engagement, and attitudes of 14-year-old students in 28 democratic countries, American young people ranked low in political engagement. The National Assessment of Educational Progress Report of 1998 indicated widespread deficiencies in the civics knowledge of United States students.

The National Conference of Lt. Governors and the National Association of Secretaries of State have recognized the need for programs to educate and excite students about the democratic process and to get them actively involved in the governmental process.

The tragedy of September 11, 2001, has underscored the importance of an educated and involved citizenry to the effective functioning of a democracy. We need to take action here in Alaska, and all across America, to grow the next generation of voters and active citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tony Knowles, Governor of the State of Alaska, do hereby proclaim October 14-19, 2001, as:

Alaska Democracy Week

and urge all Alaska residents to celebrate their freedoms and citizenship by getting involved in their school, community, and state.

## **ROTATION OF GROUND ZERO FLAGS TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

The ADP, through the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, is rotating among school districts the United States and Alaska flag that were flown over Ground Zero in New York. The flags were flown by the Alaska-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team during the period they worked in New York staffing three aid stations near the wreckage of the World Trade Center. The flags are being rotated among school districts during the 2001-2002 school year to extend the educational opportunity provided by Alaska Democracy Week and the tremendously positive response by Americans to the September 11 tragedy. The flags serve as a catalyst for learning more about what it means to be an American, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, flag etiquette and patriotism.

## **YOUTH VOTER CORPS**

The task force supported the introduction of legislation to provide for a Youth Voter Corps. The Youth Voter Corps legislation provides for high school students, 16 years of age and older to be trained to work at the polls as part of election boards. The Corps would involve secondary students in a meaningful way in the election process, raise awareness of and interest in voting, encourage responsible citizenship and provide needed election workers for the Division of Elections.

## **TIPS FOR *HOW TO GROW A GOOD CITIZEN***

The task force worked with the Alaska League of Women Voters in the development of tips for parents on how to “grow” a good citizen. The tips are being printed by Learn and Serve, a program of the Alaska Community Service Commission and will be distributed to new parents in hospitals as part of a comprehensive health and safety packet being made available through the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

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# Recommended Actions

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The ADP Task Force recognizes that standards-based civics education is part of the curriculum in many of Alaska's schools. In making recommendations for action, they used current research in the civic education field as the basis for suggestions for strengthening the existing curriculum. The recommendations reflect this research emphasizing programs that actively engage students in real experiences with government, which are proven most effective in developing civic knowledge and skills. The recommendations are intended to complement and enhance a sustained and systematic K-12 standards-based civics and government curriculum.



The ADP Task Force recommendations are divided into two categories; those to be implemented in the classroom, and those that take place outside of the classroom although the categorization is not mutually exclusive.

The recommendations are designed to meet identified goals. Targeted participants for the recommendation are noted. As used in this report, secondary students include middle as well as high school students.

### In the Classroom

These eleven recommendations are applicable for elementary and/or secondary students and/or teachers, as indicated, and are related to classroom instruction. The in-the-classroom recommendations are intended to improve the learning environment of schools, enliven the existing curriculum, and suggest resources to support classroom instruction.

### Outside of the Classroom

These five recommendations are for activities that support and augment classroom instruction. They could be implemented by the general public or by governmental entities.

Each recommendation is followed by suggestions for implementation (How), listing of contacts with the expertise to provide the leadership to implement the recommendation (Contacts), and some background information on the topic (Background).

## Action

The Alaska Democracy Project Task Force recommendations are divided into two categories; those to be implemented in the classroom, and those that are outside of the classroom.

## IN THE CLASSROOM

### GOALS

- Increase the amount, quality, and visibility of civics education in the school curriculum.
- Offer students expanded opportunities to participate meaningfully in the civic life of their communities.
- Provide teachers with improved access to reliable information on curricula, materials, and pedagogical practices that effectively engage students in civics learning.

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATION
Climate	Democracy in the Classroom and School
Curriculum	Alaska History/Alaska Studies Current Events in the Classroom Experiential Civics Programs Literacy and Civics Service Learning Student Government
Resources	Alaska Democracy Project Web Site Alaska Democracy Week Public Service
Teachers/ University	Civics Education Pre-service /In-service Courses



## CLIMATE

### DEMOCRACY IN THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL

*Recommendation (Elementary, Secondary Students and Teachers)*

#### RECOMMENDATION

Encourage all teachers and administrators to evaluate the democratic climate of their classroom and school.

#### How

- Use checklist on democratic school climate on ADP web site. (*See appendix.*)
- Include “how tos” for democratizing the classroom for teachers and administrators preservice and inservice sessions.

#### Contacts

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Parents
- School Boards
- Professional Education Associations and Organizations

## Background

Good civic education is attentive to the informal as well as to the formal curriculum. The informal curriculum includes the governance of the school community and the quality of the relationships among those within it, as well as the “extra” or co-curricular activities that a school provides. Citizenship is developed when students are actively involved in the learning process in ways that reflect a high regard for each person and when reflection, deliberation, and discourse are valued and practiced systematically.

Classrooms and schools should be managed by adults who govern in accord with democratic values and principles and who display traits of character, private and public, that are worthy of emulation. Students also should be held accountable for behaving in accord with fair and reasonable standards and for respecting the rights and dignity of others, including their peers.



## CURRICULUM

### ALASKA HISTORY/ALASKA STUDIES

#### Recommendation (*Secondary*)

Require high school students to study Alaska History/Alaska Studies that includes a local and state government component and is aligned with Alaska standards for civics/government.

#### RECOMMENDATION

#### How

- Support passage of HB 171 and/or SB144 that require that Alaska History and government be taught in secondary schools.

#### Contacts

- Legislature
- School Districts
- Alaska Department of Education & Early Development
- Professional Education Organizations and Associations

## Background

During the first session of the twenty-second Legislature, Representative Mary Kapsner introduced HB 171 which would require secondary students to study Alaska History. This bill is the latest in a series of legislative attempts over the past 20 years to require a course in Alaska History in Alaska’s high schools. The bill requires that Alaska History courses include an Alaska government component. In its report, the Tolerance Commission recommended that the study of Alaska History be mandated statewide as an approach to reducing prejudice. The ADP task force concurs with the Tolerance Commission that “understanding our state’s history provides the context for Alaskans’ origins, what we as Alaskans value about the diversity and richness of our state. It is fundamental to being an informed and effective participant in state and local affairs.” In December 2001, the Anchorage School District became one of the first large, urban school districts to join 29 other Alaska school districts in requiring secondary students take a course in Alaska Studies.

In recommending Alaska History/Alaska Studies, the task force reinforces that students should learn not only the history of the state, but also about Alaska Native and other cul-

tures, government, economics, geography, etc. The task force believes that a comprehensive, integrated course will best meet the citizen education needs of Alaska's students.

## CURRENT EVENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

### Recommendation (*Elementary & Secondary*)

#### RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that awareness, study, and discussion of current events are part of the curriculum.

#### How

- Participate in community newspaper classroom distribution programs.
- Subscribe to news magazine classroom subscription programs.
- Observe and participate in meeting of local governing bodies.
- Invite public policymakers into the classroom for debate and discussion.
- Involve Peace Corps, Vista, veterans and other resource people in the classroom to share information of world events and experiences.

#### Contacts

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Curriculum Committees
- Local School Boards
- Community Resource People
- Parents
- Newspapers in Education Coordinators

#### Background

Students need to have the knowledge necessary to participate effectively as informed and responsible citizens. Critical to this role is awareness of the issues of the day—local, national, and international. To make judgments about the role of the state and US in the world, citizens need to understand how world affairs affect their own lives, and the security and well being of their communities, state, and nation.

## EXPERIENTIAL CIVICS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

### Recommendation (*Elementary and Secondary*)

#### RECOMMENDATION

As part of comprehensive civics education, encourage and/or require students to participate in experiential civics programs such as Alaska Close-Up, Project Citizen, Kids Voting or other programs and activities such as mock trials and legislative simulations that actively involve them in the learning process.

#### How

- Maintain up-to-date list of experiential civics programs as resources and chart of civics programs included on the Alaska Democracy Project web site.
  - Share information on programs and activities with teachers during preservice and inservice opportunities.
-

## Contacts

- Curriculum Committees
- School Boards
- District Professional Development Coordinators
- Department of Education & Early Development
- Alaska Staff Development Network
- University of Alaska
- Alaska Court System
- Alaska Bar Association



## Background

Co-curricular activities that support and extend civic education should be encouraged. Activities such as mock elections, mock trials, and simulated legislative hearings promote greater interest and understanding of government and civil society. According to the Center for Civic Education, effective citizenship education programs are distinguished by at least four characteristics:

1. Extensive interaction among students;
2. Realistic content that includes balanced treatment of issues;
3. Use of community resource persons in the classroom; and
4. Strong support for citizenship education by the principal and other school administrators.

## LITERACY AND CIVICS

### Recommendation (*Elementary and Secondary*)

Connect civics education to basic literacy instruction by ensuring that reading, writing, and math incorporate civics/government content.

RECOMMENDATION

### How

- Use fiction and non-fiction literature that has social studies content to reinforce education about history and government.
- Reinforce math skills by using government/civics content (for example, analyze electoral college vote distribution, calculate taxes based on local mill levy, figure votes necessary for veto override, etc.)

## Contacts

- Teachers
- School Administrators
- Curriculum Coordinators
- Parents
- Community Members
- School Boards

## Background

The current instructional focus is on reading, writing and math because the benchmark exams and the High School Exit Qualifying Exam include these subject areas. It is important to recognize that the social sciences are part of a complete education. Indeed, these are the subjects through which much of our cultural literacy is imparted. An approach that integrates the social sciences as part of a basic education is recommended.

## SERVICE LEARNING

### Recommendation (*Elementary and Secondary*)

#### RECOMMENDATION

Encourage districts to develop local policies that include expectations for student engagement in service learning.

### Recommendation (Secondary)

#### RECOMMENDATION

Encourage student service on local and state committees, boards, and commissions.

#### How

- Maintain readily available, updated lists of organizations and institutions that provide service learning opportunities for students.
- Support youth in service learning activities.
- Establish youth positions on committees, boards, and commissions.

#### Contacts

- Teachers
- School Administrators
- Parents
- Community Members

#### Background

Research has shown that curriculum that uses service learning as an integrating force, combining needed service to the community with strong academic content and structured exercises of reflection in the classroom, can assist youth in becoming civically engaged in their communities. Community service is not a substitute for formal instruction in civics and government, but it can enhance that instruction.

## STUDENT GOVERNMENT

### Recommendation (*Elementary and Secondary*)

#### RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that students exercise responsibility for decision making by conducting classroom elections and participating in the governance of their class and school.

#### How

- Write expectations for student involvement in classroom/school governance into the K-12 curriculum.
- Conduct a mock legislature for high school students with representatives elected statewide.
- Mentor younger students, especially in middle school, in “how-tos” related to student government; how to run for office, run meetings, defray “flack,” identify, present and defend positions, etc.

#### Contacts

- Students
  - Association of Alaska Student Governments
-

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Counselors

### Background

Student government provides an opportunity for students to practice skills they will need to exercise as adults. Student participation in the governance of their classrooms and schools should be an integral part of civic education beginning in the earliest grades and extending throughout the span of their formal schooling. Classrooms and schools should be considered laboratories in which student can practice participatory skills commensurate with their maturity. They should learn to interact effectively, as well as learn how to monitor and influence school and public policies. Governance means having a voice in school roles and disciplinary procedures. It means that each student is a citizen possessed of the rights and charged with the responsibilities that accrue to citizens in a constitutional democracy.



## RESOURCES

### ALASKA DEMOCRACY PROJECT CIVICS WEB SITE

**Recommendation** (*Elementary, Secondary Students, and Teachers*)

Maintain a civics education site for students and teachers that is a “one-stop” site for civics resources, opportunities, and activities. The site should also include a checklist for evaluating the democratic climate of a classroom/school, as well as a matrix of elementary and secondary civics programs.

RECOMMENDATION

### How

- Maintain a site that is updated regularly. Website: ([www.gov.state.ak.us/lsgov/adp](http://www.gov.state.ak.us/lsgov/adp)).
- Publicize the existence of the site, especially to students and teachers.
- Include information on contacting legislators and other public officials for classroom visits.
- Encourage local organizations or governmental entities to develop volunteer contact sites to create constantly up-to-date listings of volunteer opportunities for young people.
- Subscribe to Lexis-Nexis or other on-line legal debate resource.

### Contacts

- Alaska Democracy Project, Office of the Lieutenant Governor
- Department of Education & Early Development

### Background

Surveys indicate that many young people and teachers are now getting information from the Internet. This tool provides an economical way to provide up-to-date information to Alaskans.

## ALASKA DEMOCRACY WEEK

**Recommendation** (*Elementary, Secondary Students, Teacher, and General Public*)

### RECOMMENDATION

Celebrate Alaska Democracy Week annually around Alaska Day.

#### How

- Invite the Alaska Municipal League, Legislative Affairs Agency, and Alaska Court System to collaborate in planning for the event.
- Widely advertise the week beginning in the spring; include information at Job Fairs, at summer teacher institutes, “new teacher” inservices, National Education Association-Alaska newsletter articles, etc.
- Provide written materials to staff and have staff share successes and activities of past Alaska Democracy Week.
- Work toward the goal of an elected government official in every school in the state
- Encourage teams of teachers to be involved.
- Prepare a “How To Do It” for Alaska Democracy Week with a step-by-step guide for future organizers.
- Suggest activities that are interdisciplinary, especially those that integrate with language arts and the other social sciences.

#### Contacts

- Alaska Municipal League
- Legislative Affairs Agency
- Alaska Court System
- Alaska Bar Association
- Public Officials
- Teachers
- Professional Educational Organizations/Associations

#### Background

Alaska Democracy Week, first proclaimed October 11-19, 2001, was a successful opportunity to involve the public in government and government with the public. The goal of the week was to involve Alaskans in celebrating citizenship by encouraging active involvement with government through observation and/or participation in public meetings (tribal, council, assembly), visits to classrooms by public officials, classroom elections, mock trials, mock assembly, tribal or school board sessions, etc. Continuation of this event would call general public attention to the importance of involved citizens.

## PUBLIC SERVICE

**Recommendation** (*Secondary*)

### RECOMMENDATION

Promote public service, in all of its forms (elected, appointed, and classified), as a career option.

#### How

- Ensure that students know of the opportunities for employment in the public sector by inviting representatives of tribal, local, and state government to visit the classroom, participate in job fairs, and in other awareness activities.
-

- Arrange for and encourage students to participate in internships and job shadowing at all levels of government.
- Invite students to job shadow public officials.
- Incorporate observations of local government meetings, watching televised legislative sessions and committee hearings, and participating in political campaigns as part of political science courses.
- Participate in mock elections
- Consider creation of a Public Service Academy and an undergraduate public administration courses and degree that would prepare individuals for work in government.

### Contacts

- Teachers
- Parents
- School Counselors
- University of Alaska
- Private Alaskan Universities
- State of Alaska, Department of Administration
- Alaska State Employees Association

### Background

A well-functioning democracy depends on a well educated, dedicated work force. The growing labor shortage in public service has been documented as government is becoming an employer of last resort. Government-centered public service has been replaced by a new public service in which government must compete for talent. That means that government jobs must be made more attractive and meaningful for young people who must be adequately prepared to assume such jobs. Likewise, there is a lack of interest in elected office as evidenced by uncontested races on the local and state levels. Students can become aware of the value of public service in all of its forms through contact with those in the public sector and through effective career counseling.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS/UNIVERSITY

### GOALS

- Increase high-quality pre-service and in-service professional development/training opportunities for teachers involved in civics education.
- Provide teachers with improved access to reliable information on curricula, text, materials, and pedagogical practices that effectively engage students in civics learning.

### CIVICS EDUCATION PRE-SERVICE/IN-SERVICE COURSES

#### Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that civics content, teaching methods, programs, and resources are included in the pre-service and in-service education of all K-12 teachers.

#### Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that awareness courses and materials related to public service careers are made available during pre-service and in-service courses for counselors.

### How

- Requirements for obtaining and renewing teacher certification should ensure that K-12 civics and government teachers deepen their understanding of the discipline, hone their instructional skills, and broaden their knowledge of and interaction with the civic community.

### Contacts

- Universities
- School District Professional Development Personnel
- Professional Development Organizers

### Background

More than 200 studies have found that teachers who have more professional development/training in both their subject matter and in how to teach it well are more effective with students. In order to be effective, professional development experiences, whether pre-service or in-service, should have the following characteristics. They should be content focused and pedagogically solid; feature collegiality, that is, be supportive and school based; be connected to student data; and, actively involve teachers in the learning process.

---

## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

### GOALS

- Offer students expanded opportunities to participate meaningfully in the civic life of their communities.
- Intensify community support for civics education by involving youth, parents, community groups, and the media.

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATION
Governmental Entities	Governmental Innovation Recognition Student Empowerment
General Public	Civic Information Recognition for Civic Involvement Youth Voter Corps

## GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES

### GOVERNMENT INNOVATION RECOGNITION

#### Recommendation (*Governmental Entities*)

The State of Alaska should annually publicize the opportunity for state, local, and tribal entities to apply for recognition for noteworthy innovations in government, and provide recognition for award-winning programs.

RECOMMENDATION

#### How

- Publicize recognition opportunities among commissioners, municipal, and tribal governments.
- Provide recognition for any entity that is recognized nationally for innovation in government.

#### Contacts

- State of Alaska
- Alaska Municipal League
- Intertribal Council

#### Background

For the past 15 years, the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University has administered the Innovations in American Government Program. This program strives to identify outstanding examples of creative problem-solving in the public sector and draw attention to these best practices. In addition, the Kennedy School develops instructional materials based on the contributions of award-winning innovations. Significant monetary awards are part of the program. Applications are available on line at the beginning of each year and are due in May. Such recognition would provide reinforcement for creativity in government operations and would bring public attention to the positive actions of governmental entities.

## YOUTH VOTER CORPS

### Recommendation (Secondary Students)

#### RECOMMENDATION

Institute a Youth Voter Corps to meaningfully involve secondary students in the election process, to raise awareness of and interest in voting, and to encourage responsible citizenship.

#### How

- Adopt Youth Voter Corps legislation during 2002 legislative session.
- Solicit student nominations.
- In developing selection criteria, include demonstrated interest in government through class or organizational involvement and demonstrated student integrity.
- Encourage widespread participation through recognition program/certificates, names on radio, letter from Lieutenant Governor.
- Train students through the Division of Elections.

#### Contacts

- State of Alaska, Division of Elections
- Teachers and School Administrators

#### Background

During 2001, the non-partisan, non-profit Youth-e-Vote program developed a proposal for a national Youth Voter Corps. The concept received the endorsement of the National Association of Secretaries of State. The concept was later supported by the Ford-Carter Election Reform Commission and was included in election reform legislation (Ney Hoyer bill) that passed the U.S. House of Representatives. Approximately one-third of the states currently have laws that allow for youth participation at the polls.

## Background

The background of the three recommendations for STUDENT EMPOWERMENT is similar. They grew from the work of Wendy Bay Lewis of The CivicMind (*See resource bibliography*) who has suggested five model practices for states to implement. These include listening to youth, utilizing communication channels in addition to schools, involving youth locally, linking to other community organizations, and launching new programs.

## STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

### Recommendation (Governmental Entities)

Create an annual Lieutenant Governor's Youth Issues Summit to involve high school students in a yearly discussion of important state issues from the perspective of youth.

#### Recommendation

Include students on boards and commissions and give them a voice and vote in the decision-making process.

#### Recommendation

Provide grant programs and other incentives for implementing student ideas and community projects.

#### How

- Involve youth in the planning and implementation of issue forums.
- Consult *The Power of an Untapped Resource* (see resource bibliography) for guidance.

**Contacts**

- Association of Alaska Student Governments
- State of Alaska, Office of the Lt. Governor
- Boards & Commissions, Office of the Governor
- Municipalities
- Nonprofit Organizations

**GENERAL PUBLIC****CIVIC INFORMATION****Recommendation** (*General Public/New Drivers*)

Develop and distribute tips for “How to Be a Good Citizen.” Make the information available for newly licensed drivers.

RECOMMENDATION

**How**

- Use process used by ADP in developing “How to Grow a Good Citizen.”

**Contacts**

- Alaska League of Women Voters
- Learn & Serve/Alaska Community Service Commission

**RECOGNITION FOR CIVIC INVOLVEMENT****Recommendation** (*General Public*)

Develop an annual recognition award for students, teachers and schools significantly involved in the civic life of their community or state.

RECOMMENDATION

**How**

- Develop criteria and solicit nominations from students, schools, local school boards, communities, and professional associations.

**Contacts**

- National Education Association—Alaska
- Alaska Council for the Social Studies
- Association of Alaska School Boards
- Alaska Municipal League
- Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

## Acknowledgements

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## Appendix

## APPENDIX

## Schools as Democratic Institutions

## Principles of “Best Practice”/A Self Evaluation Check List

The democratic climate of a school involves the “hidden curriculum” that is, the structures, procedures, decision-making, attitudes and behaviors.

	Yes		Somewhat		No
A democratically engaged school—					
• Is guided by a mission statement and practice that recognize importance of democracy and community engagement in school.	5	4	3	2	1
• Involves stakeholders (teachers, administrators, staff, parents, students, and community members) in a continuous, authentic, and meaningful way.	5	4	3	2	1
• Holds democratic learning at its center, i.e., student learning that is characterized by students actively working with ideas, having choices, sharing learning, increasing self-responsibilities, demonstrating learning, and working individually and collectively.	5	4	3	2	1
• Has a pervasive commitment to democracy as demonstrated by a genuine student voice in school affairs, a respect for student opinion about real school issues and student participation in school decision-making structures.	5	4	3	2	1
• Develops an infrastructure that helps teachers work with each other and the community.	5	4	3	2	1
• Is a “full-use” institution, serving a variety of community needs.	5	4	3	2	1
• Is open to engaging with the community in dialogue on real issues.	5	4	3	2	1

### **Schools as Democratic Institutions**

#### **Principles of “Best Practice”**

#### **Recommendations for Schools and School Districts**

- Reassess the democratic environment in order to learn what principles are taught deliberately, by inadvertent example, or in the “hidden curriculum” of structures, procedures, decision making, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Align policies and their implementation with a coherent democratic structure valued by all personnel.
- Implement programs of community outreach to involve community groups in creating democratic learning environments in all schools and making it possible for students to participate in decision-making activities and governance.
- Institute regular school visits and presentations by locally elected and appointed officials and state legislators to provide a venue for discussing local political issues, especially those related to education.
- With the assistance of national, local, and regional teacher training institutions, design and offer a full complement of professional development courses that integrate all aspects of civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes throughout the curriculum. These offerings should be predicated on a service learning model and on other experiential activities, using the local community as a classroom.
- Include parents, to the extent practicable, as students in these courses along with teachers to strengthen parents’ status as their children’s role models for civic involvement and commitment.
- Create at least two student positions on local school boards. Ensure that these students are able to participate fully in all decision-making activities and governance.
- Include in social studies classes, stories and lessons that teach the traditions of how ordinary citizens have created real and lasting social change.
- Reconstitute parent teacher associations as parent, teacher, student associations according student members the same rights and responsibilities as adult members.
- Provide students opportunities to work individually or in groups on service-learning activities in their schools or community.
- Work with governments, regulatory bodies, and authorities, and officials to create internship positions designed as service learning opportunities for youth.

*Recommendations adapted from “Every Student a Citizen: Creating the Democratic Self,” Education Commission of the States, July 2000.*

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